

Endangered Species Advisory Committee

**Summary Progress Report of CITES Work
1/1/2019 – 30/9/2019**

Purpose

This paper is to give a summary progress report on the work of implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) from 1 January to 30 September 2019 for the information of members.

Enforcement

The table below shows the number of inspections and enforcement actions taken during the reporting period:

Comparison with same period last year

	1/1/2018 – 30/9/2018	1/1/2019 – 30/9/2019	Variation
Consignment inspection (import, export, transit)	23 118	21 537	-6.8%
Local inspection	2 330	1 528	-34.4%
No. of investigation	700	636	-9.1%
No. of seizure	634	602	-5.0%
No. of prosecution	162	184	+13.6%

2. The majority of cases involved illegal import of endangered species. The major cases are summarised below:

Case No.	Description	CITES document available	Date of Incident	Results/Remarks
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2/2019 3/2019	Illegal import of 433 head of live turtles/ tortoises (App. I & App. II)	No	6/1/2019	Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) intercepted two Mainland passport holders who illegally imported 210 and 223 heads of live turtles/ tortoises respectively (App. I & App. II) into Hong Kong at the Hong Kong International Airport. They were prosecuted, convicted and sentenced for one year imprisonment at District Court.
19/2019	Suspected illegal import of 8268kg of pangolin scales (App. I) and 2070 kg of elephant ivory (App. I) from Nigeria	No	16/1/2019	Acting on intelligence, C&ED conducted an inspection of a sea cargo on 16.1.2019 from Nigeria via Hong Kong to Vietnam. The cargo was declared to contain frozen food. Upon inspection, 8268kg of pangolin scales and 2070kg of elephant ivory were found and they were subsequently seized. The case was investigated by C&ED.
490/2019 491/2019	Suspected illegal import of a total of 100kg of pangolin scales (App. I) from Democratic Republic of Congo	No	17/7/2019	C&ED intercepted two Mainland passport holders who imported pangolin scales without permits at the Hong Kong International Airport. A total of 100kg of pangolin scales were seized. Both offenders have been prosecuted and the cases will be mentioned at District Court on 14.11.2019.
323/2019 324/2019 325/2019	Illegal import of a total of 48.2kg of dried seahorses (App. II)	No	30/4/2019	C&ED intercepted 3 passengers holding Indonesia passport at the Hong Kong International Airport and found in their suitcases a total of 48.2 kg dried seahorses. The seahorses were claimed to belong to one of the offenders while the other 2 offenders helped carrying the seahorses to Hong Kong. All of them were prosecuted and convicted in District Court. One of the offenders were sentenced to an imprisonment of 9 months while the others 6 months' imprisonment.

1/2019	Illegal export of 3.33kg of incense tree (App. II)	No	2/1/2019	C&ED intercepted a Mainland passport holder who illegally exported 3.33kg of incense tree at the Shenzhen Bay Control Point. The offender was prosecuted, convicted and sentenced for two years imprisonment at District Court.
867/2018	Illegal possession of 8.4 kg elephant ivory (App. I)	No	29/1/2019	Acting on complaint, a shop at Mong Kok was found selling elephant ivory without the required Licence to Possess. The shop owner was prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to an imprisonment of 2 months, suspended for 12 months.

Licensing

3. The number of licences and certificates issued during the reporting period is tabulated below:

Comparison with the same period last year

	1/1/2018 – 30/9/2018	1/1/2019 – 30/9/2019	Variation
Import Licence	249	326	+30.9%
Export/Re-export Licence	12 350	13 366	+8.2%
Possession Licence	99	54	-45.5%
Re-export Certificate	1274	972	-23.7%
Special Export / Import Licence	8	10	+25%

Disposal of seized specimens

4. The Department endeavours to maximise uses of seized specimens for conservation, education or scientific purposes according to the guidelines of CITES. The following items were disposed of during the reporting period following the above principle:

(a) Local schools / institutes

A total of 14 local schools and 3 institutes have received specimens confiscated from the enforcement operations.

Some live specimens, including 2 Reeves' turtles, 2 Chinese stripe-necked turtles, 1 Malaysian box turtle, 1 Indian star tortoise, 1 python and 16 cacti, were donated to the local schools.

For dead specimens, we have donated the following items: 117.8 kg agarwood, 3.6 kg Thailand rosewood, 3.1 kg Malagasy rosewood, 0.9 kg red sandalwood, 0.2 kg Honduras rosewood, 52 crocodile skin / products, 18 lizard skin / products, 9 snake skin / products, 23 turtle shells / plastrons, 63 sea turtle scales / products, 1 stuffed specimen of sea turtle, 3 cheetah skin, 1 leopard cat skin, 1 leopard skin, 85 worked ivories, 3 ivory tusks, 2 ivory scraps, 17 hornbill beaks, 3 saiga horns, 1 hippo tooth, 0.1 kg pangolin scales, 27 mounted specimens of butterfly, 1 stuffed specimen of bird, 0.05 kg totoaba air bladder, 5 dried seahorses, 20 stony coral skeleton / products, 46 giant clam shells, and 1 humphead wrasse carcass.

(b) Other local organisations and government departments

Live specimens donated to other local organizations and government departments included 4 spotted turtles, 3 pythons, 1 common iguana, 2 scarlet macaws, 2 Alexandrine parakeets, 2 green-cheeked conures, 1 sun conure, 1 red-fronted conure, 1 black-headed caique, 1 Senegal parrot, 1 bare-eyed cockatoo, 1 chattering lory and 2 incense trees.

Dead specimens donated included 20 760 kg Malagasy rosewood, 16 320 kg Thailand rosewood, 2 880 kg red sandalwood, 0.3 kg orchid stems, 0.5 kg pangolin scales, 0.04 kg rhino horn scraps, and 1 Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle carcass.

(c) Overseas institutes / organisations

Live animals donated to overseas institutes / organizations included 22 common box turtles, 2 Madagascar big-headed turtles, 1 Annam leaf turtle and 2 leopard cats.

For dead specimen, 1.4 kg ivory scraps were donated.

(d) Repatriation

A total of 59 Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtles were repatriated to Japan, their country of origin, with the collaboration with the CITES Management Authority of Japan and Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden.

Publicity and Education

5. Continuous efforts were maintained in educating the general public, students and the traders on endangered species protection and trade regulation. Sixteen exhibitions

on endangered species protection were held at schools and other public and private venues, including a roving exhibition in public libraries.

6. A total of 44 educational talks on endangered species protection were conducted for students, traders, general public, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) as well as the travelling industry.

7. The Endangered Species Resource Centre (ESRC) received 13 041 visitors during the reporting period. Guided tours to the centre were arranged for groups booked in advance. Between April and July 2019, we collected 73 responses from a survey for visitors to ESRC. Visitors were largely satisfied with the centre and the guided visits (an average score of 4.51/5.0), and they agreed that the location (4.70/5.0), theme (4.51/5.0), uniqueness of exhibits (4.63/5.0) and the guided visit service (4.60/5.0) were important features of ESRC. A pre- and post-questionnaire conducted with a group of visiting P.1 students also showed an increase of average score from 4.04 to 6.48 regarding their knowledge related to endangered species protection. These results reaffirmed the importance of ESRC and the effectiveness of our guided visits. In addition to the existing promotion channels such as leaflets and HK SciFest, we had explored and made use of new platforms such as Hong Kong Observatory's Science in the Public Service and Education Bureau's Life-wide Learning Activity Databank to further promote ESRC.

8. To enhance the awareness and vigilance of travellers about the licensing control over the import, export, re-export and possession of endangered species, a series of publicity works was carried out at different strategic locations:

- A TV announcement of public interest was broadcast on Cross-boundary coaches of Hong Kong Guangdong Boundary Crossing Bus Association Limited and Chinalink Express Holdings Limited throughout the reporting period;
- A TV advertisement on the control of endangered species in Hong Kong was broadcast at six Shenzhen immigration control points (Shenzhen Bay, Lo Wu Port, Huang Gang Port, Wenjindu Port, Shatoujiao Port and Fu Tian Port) from 19 January to 18 May 2019 and from 17 August to 16 October 2019;
- A publicity event was arranged at all land control points, Hung Hom Railway Station, Hong Kong–China Ferry Terminal, Hong Kong International Airport, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port and Hong Kong West Kowloon station during the period from 21 January to 1 February 2019 to set up exhibition panels, and distribute pamphlets and leaflets to travellers to remind them of the licensing requirements of

endangered species especially orchids;

- Six facebook posts related to CITES were published during the reporting period in response to various cases or special events, such as the sighting of a baby crocodile in a country park, Chinese New Year, World Wildlife Day and the completion of the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP18) etc. to remind the public of the relevant legislative control.

9. In view of the CoP18 held in August in Geneva, Switzerland, a circular letter was issued on 2 April 2019 to 17 400 traders to inform them of the proposals to amend the CITES Appendices. Five consultation sessions were held in May to seek their views and comments on the proposals.

International and Local Liaison and Meeting

10. The logistics industry is an important partner to fight against smuggling of endangered species. To keep the industry abreast of the Ordinance and the relevant licensing control on endangered species, the Department delivered briefing sessions at various occasions for different key players in the logistic sector, including a workshop held by TRAFFIC for DHL on 8 March 2019, a workshop organised by the Airport Authority for airport staffs on 29 March 2019 and the Cross Boundary Transport Industry Customers Liaison Group meeting organised by C&ED on 9 July 2019.

11. The fourth meeting of Wildlife Crime Task Force was held on 13 June 2019 with C&ED, Hong Kong Police Force and the Environment Bureau. During the meeting, members discussed matters related to updates of recent enforcement, including the observations on sentencing after legislative amendments, the use of technologies in assisting enforcement. After the meeting, members also met with wildlife conservation groups and exchanged views with them on matters of mutual concern.

12. Two officers from the Department attended the Illegal Wildlife Trade Learning Academy held on 1 August by United for Wildlife, a project of The Royal Foundation of The Duke & Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke & Duchess of Sussex which aims to bring the private sector together through its Financial and Transport Taskforce to combat the illegal wildlife trade. The meeting discussed the view of illegal wildlife trade as a financial crime and explored what the financial sector could do to combat it.

13. CoP18 was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 17 to 28 August 2019. Three officers from the Department attended the meeting as members of the delegation of the People's Republic of China. The meeting considered 107 agenda items covering a wide

range of topics, including financial, strategic and administrative matters, reports and recommendations from the CITES Committees, implementation of the Convention, enforcement matters, species trade and conservation issues, and 57 proposals to amend the CITES Appendices and the associated annotations.

14. A six-day workshop was organised for 13 officials of different offices of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration from 24 to 29 June 2019. The workshop aimed at enhancing the participants' knowledge in CITES and its implementation in Hong Kong. It provided a good opportunity for experience sharing, as well as building up networks and working relationship which would benefit future cooperation between both sides on various CITES matters.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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